

**Analyzing the Outrageous:
Takehara Shunchōsai's *Shunga* Book
Makura dōji nukisashi manben tamaguki
(Pillow Book for the Young, 1776)**

C. Andrew GERSTLE

This article examines the book *Makura dōji nukisashi manben tamaguki* (1776) with illustrations by Takehara Shunchōsai in the context of a sub-genre of *shunga* books—erotic parodies of educational textbooks (*ōrai-mono*)—produced in Kyoto and Osaka in the second half of the eighteenth century. A key question is whether we should read this irreverent parody as subversive to the political/social order, and if so in what way.

Different from the erotic parodies by Tsukioka Settei, which focused mostly on women's conduct books, this work is a burlesque parody of a popular educational anthology textbook used more for boys. It depicts iconic historical figures, men and women, courtiers, samurai and clerics all as obsessed with lust, from Shōtoku Taishi, through Empresses and Kōbō Daishi to Minamoto no Yoshitsune. The article considers whether recent research on Western parody as polemic is relevant to an analysis of this and other Edo period parodies. The article also considers the view, within Japanese scholarship, on the significance of parody (*mojiri*, *yatsushi*, *mitate*) in Edo period arts. The generation of scholars during and immediately after World War II, such as Asō Isoji (1896–1979) and Teruoka Yasutaka (1908–2001) tended to view parody and humor as a means to attack the Tokugawa system, but more recent research has tended to eschew such interpretations. The article concludes by placing this work among other irreverent writing/art of the 1760s–1780s, in both Edo and Kyoto/Osaka, which was provocative and challenged the Tokugawa system.

Keywords: parody, education, burlesque, Japanese history, *mojiri*, *yatsushi*, *mitate*, polemic, *ōraimono*, *shunga*, erotic

Introduction: Parodying Didactic Textbooks

More than two thousand titles of illustrated *shunga* books (*shunpon* 春本) survive today, many with extensive text as well as explicit illustrations.¹ Within this vast corpus, my focus here is a sub-genre produced in Kyoto and Osaka in the second half of the eighteenth

1 Shirakura 2007, and Ishigami.

century: erotic parodies of educational textbooks (*ōraimono* 往来物). A key question is how do we read these parodies that make jest of the serious and didactic primers that were the mainstream of children's and young people's education, for both males and females? An hypothesis is that many of the *shunga* parodies of *ōraimono* are important sources for understanding Japanese social and cultural history, as well as being fascinating examples of irreverence.

I have previously made an argument that the erotic parodies of the Osaka artist Tsukioka Settei 月岡雪鼎 (1726–1786) created a counter-discourse to Confucian-based popular ethical texts for women which either ignore sex or portray sexual pleasure negatively, especially for women.² Among these Settei parodies are:

Onna dairaku takara-beki 女大楽宝開 c. mid-1750s, parody of *Onna daigaku takara-bako* 女大学宝箱 1716³

Onna teikin gesho bunko 女貞訓下所文庫 c. 1768, parody of *Onna teikin gosho bunko* 女庭訓御所文庫 1767⁴

Onna shimegawa oeshi-bumi 女令川趣文 c. 1768, parody of *Onna imagawa oshie-bumi* 女今川教文 1768⁵

Konrei hiji-bukuro 婚礼秘事袋 c. 1771, parody of *Konrei keshi-bukuro* 婚礼芥子袋 1750⁶

These *shunga* parodies of seminal educational texts for women constitute a sustained discourse on sexuality in direct contrast to the works parodied. Settei in the 1750s–60s, immediately after the death of Shogun Yoshimune 吉宗 (1684–1751), was working in an environment when books on strict Confucian ethics flourished and when *shunga* books and *ukiyo zōshi* 浮世草子 popular fiction had been in relative decline since the mid-1720s, following the censorship edict of 1722 against erotic books (*kōshokubon* 好色本), part of the Kyōhō Reforms 享保の改革.

Jennifer Preston, in her article in this issue of *Japan Review*, argues persuasively that Nishikawa Sukenobu's works, both *shunpon* and non-*shunpon*, aimed at subverting the Tokugawa social and political system itself, and that for many authors, artists and readers mutually-enjoyed conjugal sex had allegorical meaning that included both anti-Confucian and anti-bakufu sentiments, as well as pro-Court leanings. I do not think that Settei's works have such ambitious intentions, although the anti-Confucian rhetoric is explicit. An hypothesis has been that Settei's works focus on the importance of sexual pleasure for the physical and mental health of men and women alike, in order to foster and maintain intimate conjugal relations; this discourse runs directly against the grain of Confucian-based women's conduct books, or books that revel in the culture of the brothel districts. Settei's works suggest the need to bring greater nuance specifically to the thesis of William Lindsey that in Edo period discourse women were categorized only into either "pleasure values"

2 Gerstle 2011 and 2009.

3 *Onna dairaku takara-beki* 1998.

4 Available at International Research Center for Japanese Studies.

5 Gerstle and Hayakawa 2007.

6 Taihei 2009.

(courtesan) or “fertility values” (wife).⁷ These erotic parody books appear at the same time as early *sharebon* 洒落本; however their focus is not the pleasure quarters, and readership is directed as much at women as at men—maybe even more at women. I have argued that the exclusion of these books from research on the Edo period gives us a distorted picture of the era, especially of women’s sexuality.

***Makura dōji*: Pillow Book for the Young**

This article examines the work *Makura dōji nukisashi manben tamaguki* 枕童児拔差万遍玉莖 (shortened below to *Makura dōji*),⁸ published in Kyoto or Osaka in 1776,⁹ with images by a contemporary of Settei—the Osaka artist Takehara Shunchōsai 竹原春朝齋 (d. 1801)—and text most likely by Masuya Tairyō 増谷大梁 (perhaps assisted by Nakarai Kinryō 半井金陵). *Makura dōji* is very different from its immediate *shunpon* predecessors and might be described by many today as outrageously obscene. What do we make of this text that literally tramples all over and debases the popular, serious children’s textbook *Shindōji ōrai bansei hōzō* 新童子往来万世宝蔵 (A New Treasure House across the Ages of Teachings for Children; shortened below to *Shindōji ōrai*)?¹⁰ (This latter work was first published in Osaka in 1760 and later reprinted in 1775, from new blocks.) How do we read this parody that seems to revel in transforming Japan’s famous historical figures into sexually voracious men and women? Is this a polemical text in a political or social sense, or is it nothing more than a pornographic text poking fun at Japan’s august cultural heritage, making everyone from the highest classes downwards grovel in a debased world of bestial desires? Were such works significant in influencing social attitudes and ethics? Do they even warrant serious analysis?

The title means something like: *Pillow Book for the Young: All You Need to Know about How the Jeweled Rod Goes In and Out*, and the parody toys directly with the original serious educational book, which was an anthology of various previously published textbooks for young people, particularly boys. Many of the tales relate to history and the text is mainly in a kind of kanbun. I will analyse *Makura dōji*, asking questions about its nature as parody, and about how this work fits into the Kamigata 上方 (Kyoto/Osaka) tradition of using the *shunpon* format as a forum for subversive content. Because of the taboo on the study of *shunga*, however, academic scholarship in Japan and elsewhere has not included this book as part of the canon of Edo period literature (a neglect suffered by many other titles that have explicit sexual content). Although occasionally referred to in passing, the book has otherwise been almost totally ignored and it is not found in *ukiyo zōshi* or *sharebon* collections.

Humor, parody and satire are not, of course, the sole prerogative of *shunga*: popular poetry (*kyōka*, *senryū*), fiction and theatre are full of humorous and sometimes biting com-

7 Lindsey 2006.

8 I have examined two copies at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies.

9 The book can be dated exactly to An’ei 安永 5 (1776) from a reference in the last sentence of the text: 目出度千代のはつ春の、夜ながき比のつれずれ、寝覚の目をば悦す安くも永き玉章の、五のとし世にひろめ伝る [安永五年 = 1776]. Hanasaki Kazuo also noted An’ei 5 as the probable publishing date in Hanasaki 1988, p. 164.

10 The same text sometimes has the slightly different title, *Shindōji ōrai bansei hōkan* 新童子往来万世宝鑑, which confusingly is also the title of a different book. I am thankful to Koizumi Yoshinaga 小泉吉永 for kindly sending digital copies of this work, and including comparisons between the 1760 and 1775 editions. I also consulted a copy (dated 1792) printed from Okamura 1987.

mentary on society and politics. *Shunga*, however, being fundamentally an underground genre that operated below the censor's radar, and one in which the power of explicitly sexual images predominates, came, I believe, to have a sense of itself as a distinct genre or discourse—at least after the Kyōhō Reforms and their censorship edicts. This relegation of *shunga* into the world of “underground” publishing, ironically, permitted much more freedom to authors, artists and publishers because of their very anonymity. Let us first examine the structure and content of *Makura dōji* to see what I am describing as its “outrageousness.”

Makura dōji is a large-format *ōhon* 大本 book (27 x 19cm, 144 pp. or 72 *chō* 丁), the same size as the original it parodies, but with fewer pages. It is an important and fascinating work in many ways, clearly following in the Kamigata tradition of parody *shunpon* in the Settei style, yet innovative at the same time. It is, for example, far more biting in its humor and its satire of famous historical figures. It would take more space than this article permits to explore all aspects of the work. The book includes a large number of double and single-page illustrations and the transcription of the text alone is almost one hundred pages, much longer than most *shunpon*.¹¹ I will concentrate here on a visual and textual comparison between the opening sections of the two books, which immediately establishes the tone of parody.

The preface of *Makura dōji* boldly states:

This *warai-e zōshi* (*shunga* book), in contrast to previous playful works that lack depth in fun and pleasure, is full of innovation to its deepest core. It will delight everyone from the young inexperienced in sex with yet an immature penis to the old widow who uses warm plasters to stretch her wrinkles. . . . We have collected a variety of well-known tales about sex and written them down word for word. These will be useful for training in the art of sex and a diversion in between love-making that will stimulate you to have another session.

The intention is clear: the book is to be entertaining and aims to stimulate interest in sex. The preface also claims that the book is an anthology of *shunga* tales and lore, rather than a work of complete originality. It further places the book within an ongoing lineage of *shunga* discourse. There is the clear awareness that writers and artists are participating in an “illegal” discourse that by its definition is aimed at the promotion of pleasure in opposition to moral treatises that teach obedience and service to family and state.

The subtitles that flank each side of the main vertical title confirm that the book is for intended for pleasure, either alone or as a couple:

閨	独楽一興
	自由 枕童児拔差万遍玉茎
房	比翼翠連理

¹¹ A transcription of the short stories can be found in Hanasaki 1988.

*Solitary pleasure in the bedroom**(As you like) Pillow Book for the Young: All You Need to Know about How
the Jeweled Rod Goes In and Out**Mating lovebirds in the bedchamber*

This straightforwardly humorous statement of intent situates the book firmly within the *ukiyo zōshi* or *sharebon* genres, and the preface seems to signal that the book will be even more fun and racy than the works of Settei that preceded it. Settei, perhaps wary of government censorship, never directly referred to or made jest with historical individuals in his *shunpon*. *Makura dōji* is different from the beginning. There is a deliberate scandalousness, which at times is quite startling.

Shindōji ōrai, the “original” book being parodied, was a popular textbook surely well known to the same audience since it had first been published in 1760 and then re-issued from new blocks in 1775, just the year before publication of *Makura dōji*. We will now focus on the early parts of the two books to show how the parody works, following closely the original textbook, at least initially, and using wordplay to change the meaning, and altering images to make them sexual.¹²



Figure 1a. “Shōtoku Taishi koji” 聖徳太子故事. Shōtoku Taishi lecturing courtiers. *Shindōji ōrai bansei hōzō*. Okamura Kintarō Collection.



Figure 1b. Shōtoku (“Jōtoku” or “Seitoku,” meaning “passionate”) Taishi 情徳太子 in a field with a girl and the text says he is pinching her bottom. *Makura dōji nukisashi manben tamaguki*. International Research Center for Japanese Studies.

12 The remaining sections of the book are: one, parodies of Yoshitsune’s letter to Yoritomo, describing the debauchery of Yoshitsune and Benkei; two, parody of kanbun texts found in original; three, double-page couplings with extended dialogue, one for each month; four, illustration of a man pleasuring himself on a winter night; and finally, twelve erotic tales, each with one double-page illustration.



Figure 2a. “Shichifukujin kichisho-zu” 七福神吉書図 (Seven Gods of Good Fortune): Daikokuten 大黒天, Ebisu 恵比寿, Bishamonten 毘沙門天, Benzaiten 弁財天, Fukurokuju 福祿寿, Jurōjin 寿老人, Hotei 布袋, *Shindōji ōrai bansei hōzō*. Okamura Kintarō Collection.



Figure 2b. “Shichi kōjin kōgō no zu” 七好人交合の図 (Seven Amorous Types): Widow *goke* 後家, catamite *wakashudō* 若衆道, monk *bōzu* 坊主, mistress *mekake* 妾, old codger *inkyo* 隠居, actor *yakusha* 役者, courtesan *gorō* 女郎. *Makura dōji nukisashi manben tamaguki*. International Research Center for Japanese Studies.

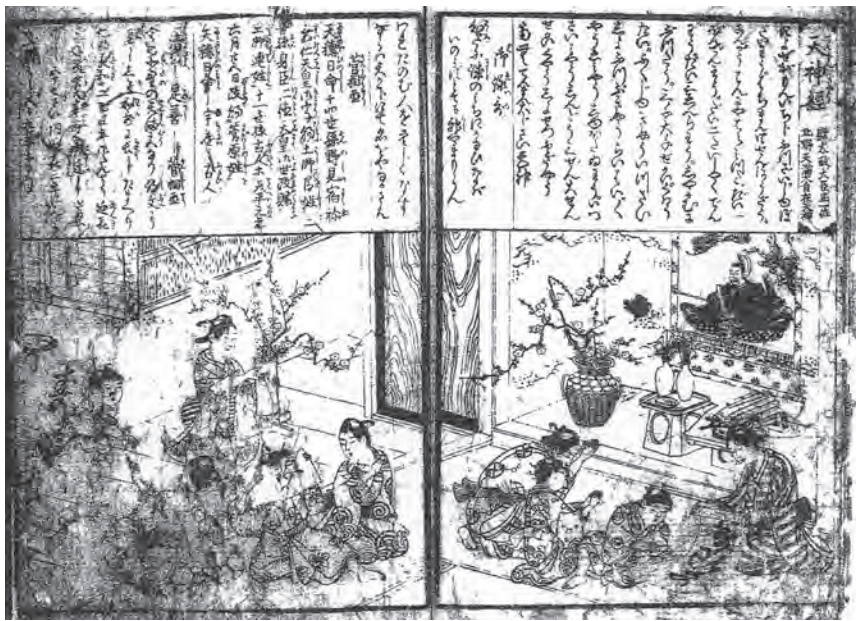


Figure 3a. “Tenjin kyō” 天神経 (Teachings of Heaven [or] Wisdom of Sugawara Michizane), showing lessons for boys, with older women helping. *Shindōji ōrai bansei hōzō*. Okamura Kintarō Collection.



Figure 3b. “Tenshoku kyō” 天職教 (Teachings of a Tenjin Courtesan), showing boys and girls exploring sexual knowledge on their own. *Makura dōji nukisashi manben tamaguki*. International Research Center for Japanese Studies.



Figure 4a. “Shogei eshō” 諸芸絵抄 (Illustrations of Examples of Children Learning Skills). *Shindōji ōrai bansei bōzō*. Okamura Kintarō Collection.



Figure 4b. Illustrations of Learning about Sexual Matters. *Makura dōji nukisashi manben tamaguki*. International Research Center for Japanese Studies.



Figure 4c (detail). *Onna dairaku takara-beki* used as a textbook for learning about sex. After listening to the man's talk on what one needs to learn about sex, the woman says: "Hurry up and get on with it!" (女「はよせいナア」); Man: "You'll be the death of me yet!" (男「命とりめ」). International Research Center for Japanese Studies.



Figures 4d (left) and 4e. Details from *Shindōji ōrai* and *Makura dōji*. Comparison of drawings of men in the original and in the parody. The male figures on the right both show one of Shunchōsai's distinctive facial types, with a pointed chin. The woman in 4e banTERS back to the man, that she "wouldn't be interested in a man with such a small penis." Collections of Okamura Kintarō and International Research Center for Japanese Studies.



Figure 5a. “Honchō Sanpitsu” 本朝三筆 (Famous Calligraphers): Emperor Saga 嵯峨天皇, Kōbō Dai-shi (Kūkai) 弘法大師 (空海), Tachibana no Hayanari 橘の逸勢. *Shindōji ōrai bansei hōzō*. Okamura Kintarō Collection.



Figure 5b. “Honchō sanpitsu” 本朝三開 (The Three Great Pussies of the Realm): Empress Kōmyō 光明皇后. *Makura dōji nukisashi manben tamaguki*. International Research Center for Japanese Studies. The text explicitly states: “Kōmyō was Emperor Shōmu’s Empress and was the greatest lecher in all Japan” 光明皇后は聖武天皇の御后にて、日本第一のすけべいなり。The text finishes by saying that she is the “goddess of horny women” (*onna no sukebei myōjin* おんなのすけべい明神). Her words in the image are: Kōmyō: “Wha.... I’m exhausted! And I finally feel satisfied.”



Figure 5c. “Honchō sanpitsu” 本朝三開 (The Three Great Pussies of the Realm): Empress Kōken (Empress Shōtoku) 孝謙天皇 (称徳天皇) with the Priest Yuge no Dōkyō 弓削の道鏡. The dialogue in the picture says: Kōken: “Never had a man this good before. Don’t hold back, let me have it all.” Dōkyō: “Please forgive me Your Highness.”



Figure 5d. “Honchō sanpitsu” 本朝三開 (The Three Great Pussies of the Realm): Tokiwa Gozen 常磐御前 with Taira no Kiyomori 平清盛. She is said to have the loudest sexual cries in Japan. The dialogue in the picture reads: Kiyomori: “Your cries are too loud, way too loud!” Tokiwa: “Sorry about that!”



Figure 6a. “Honchō sanseki” 本朝三跡 (Famous Calligraphers of the Realm): Ono no Tōfū 小野道風, Fujiwara no Sukemasa 藤原佐理, Fujiwara no Yukinari 藤原行成. *Shindōji ōrai bansei hōzō*. Okamura Kintarō Collection.



Figure 6b. “Honchō sankōshoku” 本朝三好色 (The Three Great Lovers of the Realm): Kibi no Makibi 吉備真備, Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師, Ariwara no Narihira 在原業平. *Makura dōji nukisashi manben tamaguki*. International Research Center for Japanese Studies. The text says that Kibi no Makibi was sent to China by Empress Kōken to learn about the way of sex (*shikidō shugyō* 色道しゆぎょう), and brought back a medicine to increase a woman’s pleasure in orgasm, which he presented to her; this is the beginning of *nyo’etsu gan* 女悦丸 (a popular Edo period aphrodisiac).

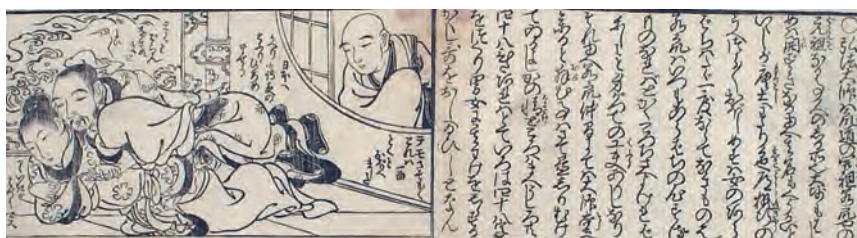


Figure 6c. Kōbō Daishi (Kūkai) and his discovery of male-male sex in China. *Makura dōji nukisashi manben tamaguki*. International Research Center for Japanese Studies. The text says that Kōbō Daishi is the founder of *shudō* 衆道 male-male love. He liked pussy, which is why he is known as “*kūkai*” (which as a pun could mean “eating cunt” 喰開) before going to China, where he learned about male-male love. The image shows him observing and saying that he “will take this tradition (*denju* 伝授) back to spread in Japan.”¹³



Figure 7. Third Month: Courtiers playing the drinking and poetry game *kyokusui* 曲水. *Makura dōji nukisashi manben tamaguki*. International Research Center for Japanese Studies.

13 Schalow 1992 outlines the long (heretical) tradition of attributing the origins of male-male love in Japan to Kūkai.

Let me give a couple of examples to explain the wordplay. Figure 3a “Tenjin kyō” 天神経, refers to the teachings of the highly revered court scholar Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845–903), also known as the god Tenjin; this is altered in Figure 3b to “Tenshoku kyō” 天職経, and the meaning of Tenjin (same Chinese characters) is changed to that used in the Osaka pleasure quarters to refer to a high-ranked courtesan. The teachings in the parody are not, therefore, those of the god of learning Tenjin (Sugawara no Michizane), but the wisdom of an experienced *tenjin* courtesan. Another section, called “Honchō sanpitsu” 本朝三筆, meaning the three great calligraphers of the realm (Figure 5a), is altered by the change of one character with the same reading to “Honchō sanpitsu” 本朝三開, the three great “pussies” of the realm (Figure 5b). The depiction of Empress Kōken (or Shōtoku) (particularly in connection with the Priest Dōkyō) as having a huge and voracious vagina seems to have a long tradition, pre-dating the Edo period.¹⁴ Here her mother Empress Kōmyō, usually revered in history as a model Empress and woman, is also cast as a vivacious lecher and as the “goddess of horny women” (*onna no sukebei myōjin* おんなのすけべい明神).¹⁵

A major section of the book is a sequence of twelve double-page illustrations, each with an extensive dialogue above the image. The couples depicted represent all levels of society. In the example below for the third month, Yayoi, the pair are young courtiers participating in the *kyokusui* 曲水 game of drinking sake and composing poetry along a stream (Figure 7). The dialogue above the image reads:

Prince: “*Kyokusui* has the hidden meaning of ‘to have sex in style’ (*kyoku tori no sui* 曲取のすい[粋]). Today I’ll do lots to make sure you enjoy yourself.”

Princess: “Since we’ve already had a few drinks, your fellow seems bigger than usual, and I’m feeling randy.”

Prince: “Look, over there upstream, that looks like Sukioka Chūjō 好岡中將 making it with a youth.”

Princess: “Watching others having fun, makes me even more excited. Hurry up and let’s get started.”

Prince: “Well then, shall we begin the princess’s lovemaking. This is when the great log flows into the narrow valley. Here comes the log.”

Princess: “Who follows all that ritual?! Hurry up and get on with it!”

Prince: “Courtiers move along slowly, relaxed, plenty of time. Same as the poor who, too, move slowly. Making love to a princess’s pussy certainly should be done slowly. Does that feel good?”

Princess: “Yes, that feels fine. Just fine! Ah, ah, ah. . . The Great Lord Chief Councillor Saneyoshi 実好,¹⁶ known for his magnificent head (*karidaka* かり高) must be like this.”

This scene is a magnificent burlesque of an elegant aristocratic drinking and poetry game. Courtiers, we learn, are no different than commoners; if anything they are even more lascivious.

¹⁴ See Yano Akiko’s article in this issue.

¹⁵ Although Empress Kōmyō is revered in some compendiums of famous Japanese women, there was also a tradition from medieval times of presenting her as a lecher. See Tanaka 1992.

¹⁶ Literally “clitoris-lover.”

It is clear that the “underground” status of *shunpon* offered writers and artists an unusual opportunity to push parody, satire and burlesque to extreme. The year of publication of *Makura dōji*, 1776, corresponds to the heyday of the Tanuma 田沼 era of relative political and cultural freedom, falling also within the era of *sharebon*, *dangibon* 談義本 and what is considered the birth of the witty and satirical *kibyōshi* 黄表紙 genre in Edo—the publication in 1775 of Koikawa Harumachi’s 恋川春町 (1744–1789) *Kinkin sensei eiga no yume* 金々先生栄花夢. It is not easy to determine if *Makura dōji* contains any direct or specific political criticism, but certainly the burlesque depictions of august historical figures, both men and women, have a remarkable rebelliousness that is anarchic in its intensity. No notable personage is to be taken seriously; everyone is nothing more than a sexual animal; no one is safe from being made the butt of jest. One interpretation could be that class or status does not matter and is simply a constructed fiction. We know that the government was sensitive to the burlesquing of historical figures and several *ukiyo zōshi* fictional works were banned around 1720 for this very reason.¹⁷

There was a long tradition of using historical figures in popular kabuki and jōruri theatre and Kyoto/Osaka *ukiyo zōshi* and Edo *gesaku* fiction to comment on contemporary topics, including governmental affairs. One question we must continue to ask is whether any serious “political” or “social” satire was in fact intended by the original authors, or perceived by their audiences. In the context of the other popular literature of the times, it is not possible, I think, to read *Makura dōji* as politically or socially innocent. Was this work part of an ongoing discourse of irreverent opposition to the Tokugawa ethical and social system? And did it therefore promote an alternative moral, social or political viewpoint?

The historical figures made to look sex-crazed are all famous and respected icons of the courtier, samurai and religious worlds. The selection of targets is based on the anthology it parodies, which presented paragons of the cultural heritage of the Japanese nation for the emulation of children. Therefore, the choice to parody this work is pointed. One can imagine that the author/artist and readers had learned from this kind of textbook as children and were clearly aware of its significance as representing the official view of Japanese history, upon which the Tokugawa system was based. Shunchōsai himself illustrated conduct books for women,¹⁸ and may have been the illustrator for the original textbook since there are some figures that appear to be drawn in his distinctive style.

The images in *Makura dōji* have been attributed, variously, to Tsukioka Settei, his school, Shimokōbe Shūsui 下河辺拾水 (d. 1798),¹⁹ or Takehara Shunchōsai.²⁰ No named individual has been suggested as the author of the text. It is possible to show persuasively by comparing images from his non-*shunga* works, that the illustrations are definitely by Takehara Shunchōsai. I would like to propose that the author of the text is most likely Masuya Tairyō, who published a few *ukiyo zōshi* under his own name, or with Nakarai Kinryō, and illustrated by Shunchōsai. We know very little about these two writers. Masuya is thought to be the publisher Masuya Hikotarō 升屋彦太郎, who bought up the woodblocks of the Hachimonjiya 八文字屋 publisher in 1763.²¹ He seems to have retired in 1774, thereafter

17 Kurakazu 2002, pp. 78–90.

18 *Jōyō fukujudai* 1774.

19 Hanasaki 1988, p. 165.

20 Shirakura 2007.

21 Asano 1975, p. 61.

concentrating on writing and editing *hanashibon* 話本 and other practical books.²² It is most likely that *Makura dôji* was a collaboration between one of these two authors (or both) and Shunchôsai. Masuya's works generally focus on the demi-monde, and are written in a lively dialogue style in the mode of *hanashibon* or *sharebon*. Nakarai's works, on the other hand, tend to focus on the theatrical world. One can easily imagine that both authors and artist had grown up with this kind of stuffy textbook and reveled in making it the butt of jest.

The Power and Influence of Popular Culture

How was this anarchic satirizing of traditional Japanese historical figures received before the modern era? It is not an easy matter to gauge the impact of popular culture on social and personal ethics. One way to judge whether popular works were viewed as subversive by the government, of course, is to determine if they were censored or banned. *Shunga* books were already officially censored, so below the radar, but much less explicit works either in sexual terms or in political terms were banned and the offenders arrested. Examples include the *kibyôshi* (comic illustrated fiction) of Koikawa Harumachi, who was arrested and died in prison in 1789,²³ and later in 1804, the ukiyo-e prints of Utagawa Toyokuni (1769–1825) and Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806), who were arrested along with publishers around what is termed the “Ehon Taikôki” incident.²⁴ Illustrated books and prints depicting the figure of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598) flourished



Figure 8. *Mashiba Hisayoshi*. By Kitagawa Utamaro, c. 1803–1804. Collection of the British Museum.

from 1797, first in Osaka and then in Edo (Figure 8). On the surface Utamaro's work seems an innocuous depiction of a figure known in the theatre as Mashiba Hisayoshi, understood as a code name for Hideyoshi, but it was considered a direct affront to the Tokugawa government, with drastic consequences, because it presented a decadent Hideyoshi.

²² Asano 1975, pp. 66–67.

²³ Araki 1970, pp. 43–105.

²⁴ Davis 2007, pp. 210–47.

Another way to demonstrate how *elites* viewed the impact of Edo period popular culture on society is to take a detour into the Meiji era at the end of the nineteenth century. Komiya Toyotaka 小宮豊隆 (1884–1966), in his *Meiji bunkashi* 明治文化史 of 1955, gives an assessment of the role of the popular and widespread hobby of bunraku 文楽 chanting (*gidayū* 義太夫) in the general education of the Japanese populace, based on his examination of many mid-Meiji era reports on society from various parts of the country:

Generally speaking, those born before 1887 usually had barely four years of primary school before setting off to work in society. When faced with the complications of human relations (*giri/ninjo* 義理・人情) in adolescence and adulthood, they learned their morality and customs not from priests' sermons, intellectual's lectures, or government proclamations, but from the words of *gidayū* plays.²⁵

Komiya acknowledges this popular theatrical discourse as an indispensable key for understanding late Edo and Meiji society. This is even truer during the Edo period when the school system was less regularized and personal hobbies were an essential element of social and cultural life.

Another interesting source for official Meiji attitudes about the impact of popular entertainments on social mores is the report of the Tokushima Prefecture Education Committee, published in 1913 under Monbushō guidance with the title *Gidayū chōsasho* 義太夫調査書.²⁶ The thrust of the report is that bunraku drama is highly influential in the education of the populace and it recommends that certain works (love suicides, etc.) be banned due to their potentially negative impact on society. The committee examined in detail the content of the plays in the repertoire and ranked them according to their suitability in the moral education of the populace. They recommend the banning of *sewamono*, which tend to focus on tragic love affairs. They also propose the editing out of all references to the Imperial family. This report gives us a clear sense of the official view of the perceived power of popular discourse. An erotic parody of a popular educational textbook would have been considered far more seditious to the Meiji era system, and of course, such books were not supposed to exist under the official censorship system in the Edo period either. It is impossible to measure impact definitively, but the continuous publication of a stream of irreverent *shunpon* constitutes a formidable anti-Confucian discourse that needs to be examined seriously. Let us now consider the function of parody, both in general and specifically in the case of eighteenth-century Japan.

Parody: *Mojiri* 振り and *Yatsushi* 賽・俏・略

The concept of *mojiri* is fundamental to much popular literature in the Edo period. We should first consider the basic meanings found in Japanese dictionaries:

1. Twist ねじる/捻る
2. Contort よじる/捩る

²⁵ Komiya 1955, p. 373.

²⁶ Tokushima Ken Kyōikukai 1913.

3. Twirl ひねる/捻る
4. Used as a technique “*tsukeku*” 付け句 in poetry.
5. Pun, wordplay 言語の遊戯
6. Imitate a famous work and make comic 有名な作品をまねて滑稽にする

The last two meanings are relatively close to the Western word parody, and the Japanese themselves will often use *mojiri* interchangeably with parody today.

There is, however, surprisingly little research on “*mojiri*” in Edo period literature, considering that it was such a fundamental element of literary production, and rarely does this research ask questions about the significance of the genre, merely demonstrating that it is a phenomenon of the Edo period.²⁷ This may be because the terms *yatsushi* and *mitate* were often used in the Edo period itself to describe rhetorical aspects of fiction, drama, and visual art. We have considerable work on “*yatsushi*” and “*mitate*” 見立て, two terms most often used in analysis of ukiyo-e prints that define different aspects of techniques of relating present society to the classical tradition.²⁸ *Yatsushi* has several meanings, the most important given in the *Nihon kokugo daijiten* 日本国語大辞典 are:

1. Disguise, dress down, shaven head 身をやつすこと。みすばらしく変えた姿。また、剃髪した姿
2. Gentle, romantic character やさ男。色男。二枚目
3. Mimesis, imitate, imitation 似せて作ること。まねること。また、そのもの
4. Dress up fashionably, dandy, flashy woman おしゃれをすること。美しく着飾ること。うわべを飾りたてること。また、その人。めかし屋

In the early eighteenth century, the word *yatsushi* was used in the Kyoto/Osaka region in *ukiyo zōshi* fiction and kabuki/jōruri to describe the technique of taking a classical story as one’s source text and then reworking it in a contemporary setting, often the pleasure quarters, and altering the focus to love affairs, essentially bringing high characters down to earth and often into poverty for a period before they are restored to their rightful position. This aspect of *yatsushi* thus seems close to “burlesque,” with its meaning of the transformation of something high class into something comic, risqué and ridiculous. The scholar Hasegawa Tsuyoshi 長谷川強, doyen of the *ukiyo zōshi* genre, has analyzed this technique and its usage within *ukiyo zōshi* fiction of the word to describe the novels of Ihara Saikaku 井原西鶴 (1642–1693), Nishizawa Ippū 西沢一風 (1665–1731) and Ejima Kiseki 江島其磧 (1666–1735).²⁹ Hasegawa, however, does not analyze the significance of *yatsushi* as parody, only considering it to be a popular Edo period technique of relating contemporary stories to classical tales. He does not consider the *yatsushi* technique to be particularly meaningful, except when the technique comes to dominate as a tour de force and as an end in itself; rather than as a means for a writer like Saikaku to skewer the essence of contemporary society and culture. He considers the prevalence of *yatsushi* simply as a convention found in many post-Saikaku *ukiyo zōshi* to be detrimental to the quality of the works as literature. Hasegawa

27 Laura Moretti has published on *mojiri* of *Ise monogatari*, and gives a thorough review of research on *mojiri* in Japanese. See Moretti 2010.

28 See Kokubungaku Kenkyū Shiryōkan 2008, and Haft 2013.

29 Hasegawa 1991, pp. 86–101.

never raises the question of what is the *significance* of the prevalence of *yatsushi/mojiri* and humor in *ukiyo zōshi*? Is it just an innocent literary technique? We might go further. Does it help us to make sense of how “*mojiri*” and “*yatsushi*” work in Japanese to analyze them from the perspective of “parody” in the West? Or does such a comparative perspective lead us astray? Is research on parody in the West relevant for Japanese scholars?

A book published in 1947 by the Edo period specialist Asō Isoji 麻生磯次 (1896–1979), *Warai no kenkyū: Nihon bungaku no sharesei to kokkei no hattatsu* 笑の研究: 日本文学の洒落性と滑稽の発達 in fact makes use of research on humor in English literature by the French scholar Louis Cazamian (1877–1965) to support Asō’s view of humor in Edo period literature as being a fundamental tool of commoners or the less powerful in opposition to the samurai rulers above them.³⁰ He makes a strong case to view the prevalence of humor in popular Edo period literature as anything but innocent; rather he sees it as a weapon towards those in power who restricted the lives of those below them. An article on *mojiri* in the Edo period published in 1950 by Fujii Kazuyoshi 藤井和義 is in a similar vein to Asō’s work but Fujii argues that *mojiri* was only a weak tool of hapless commoners or low-level samurai against a stultifying samurai government that maintained an artificial and paradoxical social and political structure which allowed for no open dissent.³¹ The time of publication of these studies—during the Allied Occupation of Japan—seems to be significant. Both see humor as a tool of the politically weak, and Fujii seems to feel the frustration of individuals free within society but paradoxically not in control of the government, the situation prevailing in Japan at the time. The view that humor in popular culture was insignificant politically in the Edo period is pervasive in contemporary Japan.

A three-volume collection of essays by various scholars, entitled *Sei fūzoku* 性風俗 and published in 1959, is unusual for an academic book in that it refers directly to *shunga* and *shunpon* in analyzing the history of Japanese sexuality.³² Teruoka Yasutaka 暉峻康隆 (1908–2001), in the first chapter, sets up the framework of the Edo period from the legal or official discourse perspective. He argues that the official line was that *ren’ai* (love) was not acceptable, and that women were to obey the men around them: their fathers, husbands and sons. He then sets up Saikaku as writing in “resistance” (レジスタンス) to this framework. Teruoka presents this “resistance” idea as the basis of his fundamental philosophy of the aims of popular literature, particularly erotic *kōshoku* works.³³

These days, however, it is rare to see a Japanese Edo period scholar refer to any studies outside the Japanese tradition to gain a new perspective on Tokugawa literature, or for them to consider the potential of popular literature to include political or social commentary. Two exceptions are both women scholars, Uchiyama Mikiko 内山美樹子, who analyzed jōruri theatre and concluded that it consistently commented and took a critical view of the contemporary Tokugawa social and political system,³⁴ and Kurakazu Masae 倉員正江, who has analyzed why certain *ukiyo zōshi* were censored.³⁵ Older studies of Edo period cultural history or literature often tried to understand Japanese culture in relation to the West or

30 Asō 1947, pp. 238–85.

31 Fujii 1950, pp. 974–84.

32 *Sei fūzoku* 1959.

33 *Sei fūzoku* 1959, p. 44.

34 Uchiyama 1989.

35 Kurakazu 2002 and 2003.

to China, and they tended to focus on the hierarchical status system and its inequalities, frequently supported by an underlying Marxist standpoint. More recent scholarship has usually eschewed this approach, and as a consequence has, like the Hasegawa work mentioned above, tended to go to the other extreme and see no political or polemic intention at all in the literature of the period. An obsession with detail among Japanese scholars of the Edo period over the last two generations has made them very knowledgeable of facts but it has also had the consequence of keeping them from asking bigger questions about the significance of what they are exploring. As a consequence no one any longer seems to feel the need to ask what the significance of parody actually is, with reference either to *yatsushi*, *mitate* or *mojiri*.

Asō's book on Japanese humor was published when he was fifty-one years old in 1947. He had experienced the full era of Japan's military society and its terrible consequences, as well as the constraints of a foreign occupation with its censorship and social and political controls. In his book, Asō argues persuasively for understanding Edo era humor as anything but innocent fun, and that the extreme and often twisted humor of this period was due to the unavoidable awareness of a political and social system that arbitrarily and artificially maintained a fictitious class system ruled by an exclusive hereditary military class.

Parody Research in the West

Parody in the West is more thoroughly researched but this genre too has been held in low esteem and thought to be of little significance by the academy for most of its history. The practice of making fun of something, of altering some work to make it humorous has not been appreciated highly in the academy anywhere, ignoring the fact that it is one of the most popular forms of human entertainment. Humor is absolutely essential and prevalent in all cultures, but it has rarely been considered high art and has been a difficult topic for research. In the West, parody, satire, burlesque and pornography are generally considered to have subversive intentions.³⁶

According to the traditional view, most often applied to European seventeenth- to eighteenth-century literature, parody must have sharp ridicule. Simon Dentith in his book, *Parody*, published in 2000, which systematically examines the history of research on the subject and the history of parody in literature, argues from a broader historical perspective for a relatively short, if not simple, definition of parody as:

Parody includes any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice.³⁷

The key phrase here, of course, is "relatively polemical." Dentith states that he is going against the earlier approach of Linda Hutcheon, who considered it wrong to define parody by its polemical relationship to the original text. He goes on to explain his reasons for using the word "polemical."

³⁶ For pornography there is Darnton 1995, Hunt 1993, and Mowry 2004.

³⁷ Dentith 2000, p. 9.

In order to capture the evaluative aspect of parody, I include the word “polemical” in the definition; this word is used to allude to the contentious or “attacking” mode in which parody can be written, though it is “relatively” polemical because the ferocity of the attack can vary widely between different forms of parody.³⁸

Making some element of the polemic an essential part of the definition of parody helps us to distinguish it from mere imitation or allusion. A parody is, therefore, usually considered to be in an attacking mode to some degree and is consciously calling attention to itself in relation to the target work. A further distinction that Dentith makes is between parodies that are aimed at a particular work versus parodies that take aim at a general area such as a genre, body of texts or a discourse.³⁹ This is an important distinction and very useful for understanding the variety of stances that parodies take. Finally, he makes one more pertinent comment on parody in the West:

It need not be funny, yet it works better if it is, because laughter, even of derision, helps it secure its point. But sometimes—and this is a consideration which I have certainly not emphasized enough—the laughter is the only point, and the breakdown of discourse into nonsense is a sufficient reward in itself.⁴⁰

In other words, irrespective of the academy perspective, parody and humor can just be good fun and the good feeling that laughter brings is value enough—although this is difficult to quantify in academic discourse.

Building on the work of Dentith, Robert Mack has recently reviewed the history of research on parody in the West as an introduction to a discussion of parody in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English literature.⁴¹ It is certainly intriguing that both in Europe and in Japan, parody becomes a predominant literary form in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Again, can the perspective of eighteenth-century English parody be useful for helping us to understand eighteenth century Japanese *mojiri/yatsushi*? Mack cites the work of Robert Phiddian who argued that parody was similar to Derrida’s idea of deconstruction, particularly Derrida’s idea of “erasure.”⁴² In this view parody, at its most sophisticated, is a deconstructive dialogical reading of the target text and is both a commentary and a deconstruction. Phiddian took this line of thought to the extreme position of claiming that “parody” and “deconstruction” are the same thing.⁴³ Such an approach certainly makes parody as a genre appear to be much more significant and less simply parasitic. These are heady thoughts for those who would approach eighteenth-century Japanese *mojiri/yatsushi* texts from such an analytical view.

38 Dentith 2000.

39 Dentith 2000, p. 7.

40 Dentith 2000, pp. 37–38.

41 Mack 2007.

42 Mack 2007, pp. 41–42.

43 Mack 2007, p. 42. For original article, see Phiddian 1997.

Conclusion

Makura dōji is a masterpiece of *shunpon* in terms of its scope, text and images. For many today, including many Japanese, however, its outrageous burlesque and irreverent parody may appear offensive and shocking. It is clear that the underground nature of *shunpon* publishing allowed for a freedom to satirize whatever was sacrosanct or pretentious in society. There is, however, no sense of any direct attack on the Tokugawa state, or call to arms. At the same time, the humorous and biting tone of the works and the making of highly respected figures into ridiculous objects of jest cannot be dismissed as simple nonsense. The reader is invited into an evolving *shunga* discourse where sexual desire is the great leveler that brings low the high and mighty to wallow in the bestial realm. The object of the parody is, directly, the *ōraimono* textbook genre and its status as the orthodox tool of children's education within an ordered Tokugawa system. We witness here an intriguing phenomenon: Osaka and Kyoto commercial publishers must have produced both the didactic textbooks and their parallel *shunga* parodies. Are these *shunga* parodies weapons with polemic aims against the Tokugawa polity and its strict hierarchical social system? At the very least, *Makura dōji* fits squarely within the trend of the relatively new genre of *sharebon*, with its focus on sex and on satirical writing.

Asō Isoji surely saw the paradox of the Tokugawa system, with its artificial social and political façade, through the lens of his own personal experiences of 1930s–1940s Japan. So, too, it is helpful for us to see *Makura dōji* in its original political context. The 1770s were a dynamic political and cultural era with the rise of Tanuma Okitsugu 田沼意次 (1719–1788) to the powerful position of *rōjū* 老中 in 1772 and the subsequent liberalizing of cultural, political and social life. Kyoto, with the Court at its center but chafing under the strict control of the bakufu was characterized, as Jennifer Preston has argued (see Preston essay in this issue), by its pro-Court, anti-bakufu sympathies. However, the artificial nature of the Tokugawa system was perhaps felt most acutely in Osaka which had been betrayed by Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1542–1616) and put firmly under his government's yoke. Osaka was a commercial city with a basically egalitarian and self-reliant philosophy, which held that advancement should be based on merit and hard work. Twelve years after this Shunchōsai parody of all things sacrosanct in Japanese history, his contemporary Nakai Chikuzan 中井竹山 (1730–1804), head of Osaka's official "university" the Kaitokudō 懷徳堂, would present his radical ideas on how to reform Japanese government and society directly to Matsudaira Sadanobu 松平定信 (1758–1829), who came to Osaka in 1788 while he was enacting what would come to be known as the Kansei Reforms 寛政の改革. One of Chikuzan's fundamental planks for reform was the abandoning of the samurai class hereditary stipends; another was to set up a national education system open to all—both ideas that would ultimately be carried out following the Meiji Restoration. Chikuzan's brother Riken 履軒 (1732–1817) wrote a fable about a land where there were no samurai, and another Kaitokudō scholar Tominaga Nakamoto 富永仲基 (1715–1746) even went as far as to write a treatise critical of Confucianism, Buddhism and Shinto from the perspective that these were all historically determined philosophies created by individuals for particular purposes, and without absolute truth (he seemed to have gone too far even for the Kaitokudō and was expelled). Najita Tetsuo has argued that these scholars in Osaka, outside the centers of political or courtier life, were highly critical of the Tokugawa system, protesting that not only

samurai had the right to participate in governance.⁴⁴ The prevalence in eighteenth-century Kyoto and Osaka of commentary, both coded and direct, on the samurai government and its hierarchical and hereditary system, in both the popular arts and the Kaitokudō Academy, strengthens the case that we should not ignore the political and social criticism in *shunga* texts like *Makura dōji*. Nakai Chikuzan's position as the head of a school given an official charter by Shogun Yoshimune allowed him to confront directly the Tokugawa polity and speak to Sadanobu without fear of reprisal.

For the average citizen, however, this access to the corridors of power was impossible and open criticism of the system extremely dangerous. The question we are left with is whether this sexually charged attack on the icons of the nation constituted a meaningful counter-discourse and had any significant impact on Japanese society or culture? This is a big question that should not be answered in isolation, but rather considered in the wider context of popular literature/theatre/art/*shunga* in general, where the stream of anti-Confucian discourse remained demonstrably constant. *Makura dōji* is one brilliant work within a long tradition of indirectly commenting on or attacking the Tokugawa system. If one could satirize revered historical aristocratic figures such as empresses, Sugawara no Michizane, Kūkai, Yoshitsune etc., then nothing that was held up as sacred was safe from ridicule and derision, certainly not the bakufu government. These "underground" *shunpon* offer us a radically different view of the Edo period, and considered together with other non-*shunga* works, show a lively discourse of commentary and criticism of the Tokugawa polity. It is certainly time to reconsider the aims and power of parody and humor in the Edo period, and to include *shunga* books as an important part of its cultural heritage.

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